

September 6 Su Reading B249 — Isaiah 42 — Behold My Servant

Audio: [Isaiah 42 \(ESV\)](#)

Three Servants — This is the first of four Servant Songs in Isaiah, describing in advance the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ. God opens this chapter by saying, “*Behold my servant ... my chosen ... I have put my Spirit upon him*” (v. 1). Of this Servant, God said, “*I have called you ... I will give you as a covenant for the people*” (v. 6). God’s Servant would bring the call of salvation to the world. Their response should have been this: “*Sing to the LORD a new song*” (v. 10). Instead, His own people were unresponsive to this call from God: “*Hear, you deaf, and look, you blind*” (v. 18). In the middle of this Servant Song, God called His own dull people His “*servant,*” saying, “*Who is blind but my servant ... blind as the servant of the LORD?*” (v. 19). They should have been serving Him faithfully, but they weren’t. As a result, “*they have become plunder with none to rescue*” (v. 22). They would spend 70 years in Babylonian exile to think about it. One Servant was calling, while the other servant was silent. There is really a third servant in God’s overall story, which is the Christian. Paul said that “*one should regard us, as servants of Christ*” (1 Cor. 4:1). We have been given the message of salvation to share with a world sitting in darkness and disobedience. Do not be silent!

September 7 M Reading B250 — Isaiah 43 — I, I am He

Audio: [Isaiah 43 \(ESV\)](#)

Unexpected Grace — The unusual greatness and love of God is stressed in this chapter. He created and redeemed Israel to be His own (v. 1). He said He was their Savior from Egypt because “*you are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you*” (v. 4). Israel was God’s intended example for the world: “*You are my witnesses ... whom I have chosen*” (v. 10). God makes two striking statements in this chapter that emphasize His saving uniqueness: (1) “*I, I am the LORD, and besides me there is no savior*” (v. 11), and (2) “*I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake*” (v. 25). In the past, He had dramatically saved them from Egypt’s slavery, but now He says, “*Behold, I am doing a new thing*” (v. 19). He would also deliver them from exile in Babylon (v. 14) “*that they might declare my praise*” (v. 21). All of this would be done by a loving God, although His people “*did not call upon me ... but you have been weary of me*” (v. 22). That is grace, and God is our example of grace. We need to be responding to the sin and hardness of the people around us with the same kind of grace. We should help those people respond positively with something like, “*Wow, I never expected that!*” Grace is always unexpected because it is a God-thing.

September 8 Tu Reading B251 — Isaiah 44 — Cyrus My Shepherd

Audio: [Isaiah 44 \(ESV\)](#)

Fulfilling Prophecy — God contrasts Himself in this chapter to the false gods made by human hands. He alone is God, declaring, “*besides me there is no god*” (v. 6). He is the Guide of history, saying of Israel, “*I have chosen ... made ... and will help you*” (vv. 1-2). Unlike false gods, He can “*declare what is to come, and what will happen*” (v. 7). He proves that at the end of this chapter by predicting by name that Cyrus the Great would be used by Him to rebuild Jerusalem and its temple following Judah’s Babylonian exile (v. 28). The Jewish historian, Josephus, wrote that Cyrus read this prophecy in Isaiah’s book, which led him to do what was predicted. In contrast, those who fashion lifeless idols “*are nothing ... [and] shall be put to shame*” (vv. 9, 11). The craftsmen don’t see the foolishness in that the wood they use to make idols was grown by God’s provision (v. 14) and is also used as fuel for their own warmth and cooking (v. 15). The creator God who made wood and fire and who sees the end from the beginning, is the God we love and serve. He is amazing. Stop right now and praise Him!

That They May Know — The uniqueness of a loving God is certainly the overall theme of this chapter. Ten times God referred to Himself with statements like, “*there is no other*” (v. 5, 6, 14, 18, 21, 22). God repeated these statements, not from selfish pride, but from His desire to draw people throughout the world to salvation. It was “*that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me*” (v. 6). God called to them, “*Assemble yourselves and come ... you survivors of the nations ... there is no other god besides me. Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth!*” (vv. 20-22). Cyrus the Great was one of those targets of invitation. God called him His “*anointed ... whose right hand I have grasped*” (v. 1). He was told, “*I will go before you ... I will break in pieces ... I will give you the treasures ... that you may know that it is I, the LORD ... who call you by your name*” (vv. 2-3). God also did this “*For the sake of my servant Jacob, and Israel my chosen*” (v. 4). He would use Cyrus to “*build my city and set my exiles free*” (v. 13). Cyrus should have seen that Yahweh alone was behind his ability to accomplish all these things. Did he turn to God? We have no indication that he did. We are surrounded today by people like Cyrus who see God’s amazing creation and the things He allows mankind to accomplish. Do they acknowledge that “*there is no other*” than Yahweh? Do they turn to Him in joyful surrender? Most do not, and to those we are to cry out with the message of salvation.

Displaced Dependence — The idea of the uniqueness of God in comparison to idols continues into this chapter. Bel and Nebo, in the first verse, were primary gods of the Babylonians. Their helplessness was compared to the activity of Yahweh. Their idols are “*things you carry ... they cannot save*” (vv. 1-2). On the other hand, Yahweh said that the people of Israel, “*have been borne by me ... I will carry and will save*” (vv. 3-4). The false gods are carried by their worshipers, while the real God carries his worshipers. An idol of Babylon “*cannot move from its place ... it does not answer or save*” (v. 7). Conversely, Yahweh is “*declaring the end from the beginning ... [and promises] I will bring it to pass*” (vv. 10-11). Despite this obvious display of superiority to Israel, God called them “*stubborn of heart ... [and] far from righteousness*” (v. 12). Mankind does not readily turn to God. One insight that can be gained from the overwhelming idol worship of all the nations surrounding Israel is that God has created deep within all people a desire to worship something outside of themselves. It is a desire to worship Yahweh alone, but because of our sinful nature and the involvement of Satan’s forces, many people put another object of worship in place of God. That is displaced dependence. It is a lack of awareness of the greatness of God, our Creator.

Missed Opportunities — Prophecies against the idol-worshiping Babylonians continue in this chapter. They are pictured as a pampered girl (“*virgin daughter of Babylon*”—v. 1) who must now face reality as God brings His judging vengeance upon them (v. 3). They had been “*the mistress of kingdoms*” (v. 5) and had “*love of pleasures*” (v. 8), but they “*showed ... no mercy*” (v. 6) to captured Judah. God said of them, “*You felt secure in your wickedness*” (v. 10a), but they blasphemed by saying, “*I am, and there is no one besides me*” (v. 10b). Their “*many sorceries ... many counsels ... [and gazing] at the stars*” (v. 13) did not reveal their divine punishment. Their judgment would “*come to you in a moment, in one day ... in spite of your many sorceries*” (v. 9). We will read details about that devastating day later from the Book of Daniel. They were trusting in their own strength and in their false beliefs that their idols would save them. They could have learned about Yahweh from the people of Judah; however, those people of God were not following the Lord or depending on His

power either. How can we Christians influence others toward Christ if we are not following Him wholeheartedly? His light will shine through us if we are faithful and diligent in loving and serving Him. Judah missed their opportunity to be God's messengers to their captors.

September 12 Sa Reading B255 — Isaiah 48 — For My Namesake

Audio: [Isaiah 48 \(ESV\)](#)

Saving Grace — This chapter is a summary of the history of Israel. Although called by God, they would “*swear by the name of the LORD ... but not in truth*” (v. 1). They were half-hearted believers. God predicted events in advance so they could not give the credit to their idols (v. 5). Then God said, “*I announce to you new things*” (v. 6). He would put them through “*the furnace of affliction*” (v. 10) for their sins, but it would be “*for my own sake*” (v. 11), exhibiting His character of love, forgiveness, and faithfulness. God told them in advance that He would call Cyrus to free Judah from Babylon (v. 14). They were to “*flee from Chaldea ... with a shout of joy*” (v. 20) in a second Exodus (v. 21) when God would lead them back to the Promised Land. Although they were unfaithful followers, they belonged to God, and He would rescue them and care for them. We are like Judah in many ways. Our devotion and faithfulness to God is not always true and wholehearted. We slip into sinful ways and neglect Him, but despite our failings, He chooses to remain faithful to us. What a gracious Savior!